

Message Text

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SUBJ: CABINET CHANGE FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

1. THE APPOINTMENT OF THREE MINISTERS AND A RESHUFFLE OF ALL BUT ONE OF THE FORMER MINISTERS, WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS, SOLOMON MAMALONI, MONDAY, JULY 14. ONE OF THE NEW MINISTERS COLIN GAUWANE, WAS A GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHER. THE OTHER TWO, DR. FRANCIS KIKOLO AND BILL PAGE, ARE MEMBERS OF THE INDEPENDENT GROUP IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. ONE MINISTER, FATHER PETER THOMPSON, HAS RESIGNED, AND ANOTHER, PHILIP SOLODIA, RETAINS HIS PORTFOLIO OF WORKS AND PUBLIC UTILITIES.

2. THERE ARE TWO NEW MINISTERIES, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT, AND NATURAL RESOURCES. THE FINANCE MINISTRY WAS ESTABLISHED AS ANOTHER STEP TOWARD SELF-GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENCE. FORMER EX-OFFICIO FINANCIAL SECRETARY JOHN YAXLEY RECENTLY RETURNED TO LONDON AND THE DECISION WAS MADE TO RESTRUCTURE THE ENTIRE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT SINCE THE SOLOMONS IS PLANNING TO INTRODUCE ITS OWN CURRENCY NEXT YEAR TO BE MANAGED BY A THREE MAN BOARD.

3. THE MINISTERIES AND MINISTERS ARE:

FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: WILLIE BETU

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FOREIGN TRADE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR: DAVID KAUSIMAE

HEALTH AND WELFARE: BILL PAGE
WORKS AND PUBLIC UTILITIES: PHILIP SOLODIA
HOME AFFAIRS: DR. FRANCIS KIKOLO
AGRICULTURE AND LANDS: COLIN GAUWANE
NATURAL RESOURCES: STEPHEN CHEKA
EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS: DR. GIDEON ZOLOVEKE

4. THE NEW MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, BILL PAGE, IS A FORMER AUSTRALIAN FARMER WHO CAME TO THE SOLOMONS IN 1951 AND HAS SERVED IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AS DEPUTY SPEAKER. HE WORKED AS SHIP'S CAPTAIN BEFORE SETTLING IN THE ROVIANA LAGOON.

5. DR. KIKOLO, THE NEW MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, REPRESENTS EAST YSABEL AND SAVO AND IS SERVING HIS FIRST TERM IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. HE STUDIED AT THE FIJI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND AFTER WAR SERVICE AS AN OFFICER IN THE MEDICAL CORPS HE JOINED THE MEDICAL SERVICE.

6. THE NEW MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LANDS, MR. GAUWANE, COMES FROM WEST KWARA'AE AND REPRESENTS THE CENTRAL MALAITA CONSTITUENCY. HE TRAINED AS A TEACHER IN FIJI AND HAS TAUGHT IN HONIARA AND AUKI.

7. MR. BETU IS A FORMER SCHOOL TEACHER AND SCHOOLS INSPECTOR. HE WAS ELECTED TO THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN 1970. HE SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE AND WAS MADE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS WHEN THE MINISTERIAL SYSTEM WAS INTRODUCED LAST YEAR. WHEN FATHER THOMPSON TRANSFERRED MINISTRIES BECAUSE OF ILL HEALTH, MR. BETU BECAME MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR.

8. CHIEF MINISTER MAMALONI DECLINED TO PUBLICALLY COMMENT ON THE PRIVATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETINGS CALLED JULY 10, 11 AND 14 BEFORE THE NEW MINISTERS WERE ANNOUNCED. HE MADE NO COMMENT ON A STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION UNITED SOLOMON ISLANDS PARTY (USIPA), BENEDICT KINIKA. KINIKA SAID THE GOVERNMENT APPROACHED USIPA ON POSSIBILITY OF FORMING A COALITION, BUT WOULD NOT AGREE TO USIPA CONDITIONS FOR ENTERING A COALITION. ACCORDING TO KINIKA, USIPA WANTED MAMALONI AND USIPA LEADER, JOHNATHON FIFI TO MAKE PUBLIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BROADCASTS ON WHY COALITION WAS BEING SET UP. USIPA ALSO WANTED THE MINISTRIES OF 1) EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, 2) FOREIGN TRADE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR, AND 3) AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMY ALLOCATED TO USIPA MEMBERS. THEY ALSO WANTED THE FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY TO GO TO PHILIP SOLODIA AND ANOTHER, UNNAMED MINISTER, BE DROPPED FROM THE GOVERNMENT. FINALLY, THEY DEMANDED THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOW THE USIPA PARTY MANIFESTO.

9. COMMENT: BRITISH OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF THE "WEAKNESS" OF A NUMBER OF MINISTERS AND THE NEED TO CREATE TWO ADDITIONAL MINISTRIES WAS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR MAMALONI TO SHIFT CABINET POSITIONS WITHOUT LOSING CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL SUPPORT. DR. ZOLOVEKE SHOULD BE A POPULAR REPLACEMENT FOR STEPHEN CHEKA, THE MAN BEST REMEMBERED AS MISHANDLING THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAY OF THIS YEAR. CHEKA FIRED 117 OF THE DEMONSTRATING STUDENTS WHICH PRODUCED A WALKOUT IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. CHIEF MINISTER MAMALONI THEN HAD TO MEDIATE WITH THE STUDENTS IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A RESOLUTION SATISFACTORY TO ALL CONCERNED.

10. WITH THE CABINET CHANGES, MAMALONI DEMONSTRATED HIS ABILITY TO CONTROL THE POLITICAL SITUATION WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY DESPITE THE AMBITIONS OF OPPOSITION MEMBERS. BRINGING IN THE TWO INDEPENDENTS PAGE AND KIKOLO WILL DEFINITELY STRENGTHEN THE CABINET AND MAMALONI'S OWN POLITICAL POSITION AS THE COUNTRY MOVES TOWARD SELF-GOVERNMENT. END COMMENT.
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